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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ITS RELATIONS

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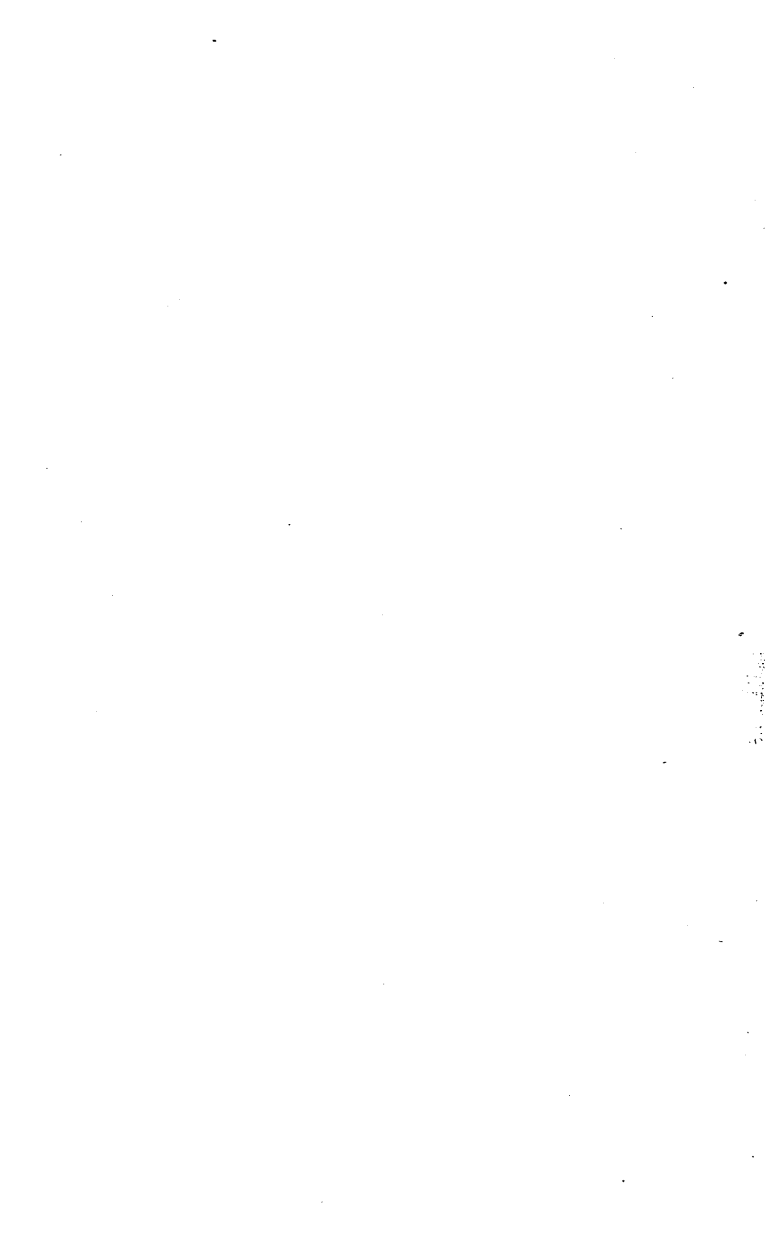
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PREFACE



OF the seven articles comprised in this little volume, six have already appeared in the pages of the *Sunday School Chronicle*. The seventh, by the Rev. A. R. Henderson, has not appeared before in any form.

The present Editor desires to state that, although these essays were written at his suggestion, they were not written to order in the sense of having the scope of their treatment indicated to the writers. It was his aim to get deliverances upon the various subjects here treated, from men well qualified to speak, both because of their specific knowledge, and their appreciation of the Sunday school as

an increasingly important educational factor in our land.

It will thus be understood that each writer is alone responsible for any particular opinions expressed ; and that the Sunday School Union is not necessarily committed to the views here enunciated on any debatable question. But the Council of the Sunday School Union, and the present Editor, believing that these papers contain much valuable suggestion and guidance for Sunday school teachers, send them forth in this form with a hearty God-speed.

A. M.

August, 1896.

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The Sunday School and its Relations



TO THE HOME

“They to whom a boy comes asking, Who am I? and what am I to be? have need of ever so much care. Each word in answer may prove to the after life what each finger touch of the artist is to the clay he is modelling.”

It is an old and an obvious objection to Sunday schools that they relieve parents of a duty which cannot be performed by proxy. Unquestionably there are duties which none but a parent can perform. It is only in the home that certain qualities, fundamental in character, can be produced. Ask why it is that so many persons

cannot be got to take serious views of life, and why it is that the godliness of many seems always an effort—and a not very successful effort—and the answer is, They are inherently irreverent. Inquire further into the source of their irreverence, and it will commonly be found that, estimable as their parents may have been, they were not such as to inspire reverence in their children—had some little foibles or some manifest weaknesses, which might not repress love, but which did forbid reverence in the children. Children can only learn to reverence God by first of all learning to revere their earthly parent, who, to the infant, is the highest being, and the visible representative of all that is above it. If the young faculty of reverence gets nothing to feed upon, it dies out, and sometimes has no resurrection.

But not only does the parent stand in the room of God to the child, but also it is in home and week-day school

life that the moral qualities find their natural and most genial nursery. The fundamental virtues of truth, kindness, courage, patience, and temperance may be inculcated by the Sunday school teacher, but they can be exercised and developed only in the home. As the incidents of daily life present occasion for the exercise of these virtues, the parent must be the teacher in this true school of character. The tone of the family forms the child. Where the talk is all of gaieties, of balls, and theatres, and saturnalia, of money, of the dress, demeanour, and conduct of neighbours, the children cannot be expected to rise above the level of the parents. But where it is evident that the thought of the parents is not all spent on trifles and pleasures, where there are kindly and unworldly sentiments uttered, and no unseemly fretfulness about little things displayed; where the presence of Christ is manifested, not in a sanctimonious observ-

ance of forms, but in thoughtful love, in frank yet grave reference to sacred things, there the children are likely to catch the family spirit, and to learn to think of religion as a real love for God and man.

It is the parent who can give the child independence of character, by withholding all help which can be done without. It is the parent who can form him to that robust manliness which counts for so much in life, and which is the husk which guards more sensitive qualities. It is the parent who can educate his conscience by gradually leaving him without distinct rules, and by leading him to discriminate for himself between right and wrong. It is the parent alone who can note the changes in a child's demeanour, and can observe the mood in which a word to soften and lodge in the heart can be hopefully spoken. It is the parent who is ever with his child, and can suit counsel and guid-

ance to every opportunity ; and it is the parent who is ever with the child as the example which he will infallibly copy, by whose consistent, open life the child will be encouraged in well-doing, and unconsciously carried into a similar course ; or by whose wrong-doing he will justify his own iniquities, and grow up tenfold more a child of hell than his model.

Perhaps it was commoner in past generations than in the present for parents to give to their children some positive religious instruction. Everywhere young men seem to be growing up without much knowledge of Scripture, and without firmly held religious convictions. Various causes contribute to this. There are multiplied demands on the time and energy of parents ; there are more numerous appeals to the attention and interest of the young ; there is less doctrinal preaching ; there is, in some quarters, considerable doubt regarding the truth

to be taught ; and perhaps, above all, there is a crying want of a thoroughly satisfactory manual of instruction. But be the causes what they may, the result is to be deplored.

But even admitting, nay, urging, all that can be said in favour of home training, it remains to be asked whether the children who enjoy such training may not be profitably employed in also attending a Sunday school. And, further, what of the children who have no such training?

First, then, can the child who is well instructed at home gain anything by attending a class at school outside? Probably the parents who themselves spend most pains in teaching their children will be the first to admit the advantages of instruction by a teacher not otherwise related to the child. These advantages are sufficiently obvious. The stimulus of a class, the mild excitement of numbers, the cheeriness of company, make learning easier.

The task which is sheer toil when undertaken in solitude, is almost play when shared with others. Each learns not only by his own individual effort, but also by the thinking and learning of all the rest. The momentum of each mind is multiplied by the number of his class. To forego the immense aid which nature thus provides for the quickening of the child-mind is foolish.

It is also a great gain to have children from various families brought together for religious instruction, because they thus become acquainted with the religious contents of one another's mind. Reticence on religious subjects has a good side, but it is generally carried too far ; and it largely results from our never feeling quite sure of our neighbour's attitude towards the objects of faith. Any influence which may be expected to counteract this, must be welcomed. Such an influence, although it may not be powerful, exists in the Sunday

school. Here boys and girls coming from families whose customs and ways may be different, listen to the same instruction, learn the same hymns, and join in the same prayers. Insensibly this operates towards inducing a somewhat readier frankness in speaking of things religious.

Where no religious instruction is attempted at home, the Sunday school must be welcomed as a needful adjunct, in the interests both of the individual child and of the community. One of the good feelings which dies hardest in a parent is the desire that the child should not be sucked down by his example into pollution and degradation. And parents who have little hope for themselves, and who feel that if they proposed to teach their children religious truth, they would only be adding hypocrisy to their sins, are glad to send them where they hear "what is good." And instances occur in the history of every school which

go to prove that the good does not terminate with the child, but passes to the entire home. The boy unconsciously singing the hymns he has learned, or repeating the stories he has been told, putting to his parents the questions that have been put to himself, becomes the most effective of missionaries. Faith seems appropriate in a child, and the solemn inquiries which in an adult would be considered as priggish, or insufferable, sit suitably and inoffensively on the lips of the young. Apart altogether from any influence which Sunday-school children may reasonably be expected to exert when they grow to maturity on their own prospective homes, their present influence on the homes of their parents is great. Sometimes they are the one channel through which any religious thought or hope visits the home.

But the influence of the Sunday school on the home of the teacher also deserves a word. Teachers form

an appreciable part of our population, and their homes must number many thousands. In all of these homes a certain bond is formed to the Church and to the poor, if the school be among the poor. The arrangements of the Sunday are adapted to the needs of the teacher, his desire to have a good lesson to give is sympathised with, his interest in his scholars quickens and warms the Christian life of the family. Frequently the preparation of the lesson, the gathering of material, the talk about the pupils, are found to be a healthy stimulant. But, most of all, every family is the better for being brought into connection with the poor, and with those who are approaching the gates of life, and need counsel and guidance. Nothing is more gladdening or more satisfactory than to find that one can actually do some good in the world.

MARCUS DODS.

TO THE CHURCH

“ O Thou who watchest the ways o’ men,
Keep our feet in the heavenly airt;
An’ bring us at last to Thy hame abune,
As leal as the bairns in heart.”

THE Sunday school, like so many of our beneficent institutions, owed its origin to the inventiveness of love. Robert Raikes, the founder of the system, was a true lover of children, and was distressed by the sight of so many little ones in his native town of Gloucester growing up ignorant and depraved. He started schools and paid teachers to teach classes at eight o’clock in the morning, and then again in the afternoon at the close of the church service. The condition of

affairs then, though not much more than a hundred years ago, was very different to what it is now. The schools were meant for poor children, and most of them had no education whatever. So they were taught to read, as well as instructed in religious knowledge. With compulsory and universal education enforced by law, the Church is now relieved from the secular part of the work instituted by Raikes, and the whole organisation of the Sunday school is devoted to its proper task.

All differences about the vexed question of religious instruction in day schools are really disputes about method. The whole religious community is at one on the value and necessity of such training. More than ever we see the importance of early influencing the children morally and spiritually. Every thoughtful person will at once admit the deep truth of Von Humboldt's remark, "What-

ever we wish to see introduced into the life of a nation must be first introduced into its schools." And if, in the opinion of many, less attention is being paid to religious instruction in the ordinary schools of our country, the more need is there for the Church, by her special organisation, to supply the want. Of course nothing can take the place of home influence in a sphere like this, which is so dependent on *atmosphere*. In an ideal home-life the Sunday school would be a superfluity, if not an impertinence, so also would the Church be in an ideal society. As it is, the Sunday school fills up an undoubted want in the training of too many children. And in any case, even when the home conditions are all that can be desired, a new element is introduced and a new influence exerted by the class work and discipline.

Whatever branch of its Christian activity a congregation may be lax about, it can least of all afford to

neglect its Sunday school. Neglect here will strike a blow at its life.

I. THE DUTY OF THE CHURCH TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Theoretically, this is acknowledged on all hands. Almost every congregation of every branch of the Church possesses the organisation. But too many Church members are content with the knowledge that the organisation is there. Teachers are left so severely alone that they lose heart, and even when they are faithful are inclined to look upon their work as routine for want of the interest and encouragement that could so easily be given. Much is done nowadays for teachers in the way of help in the study of lessons, but important as accurate knowledge and trained skill are, there are things which far outweigh these for truly successful work. The qualities of heart and character which a teacher takes to his task are paramount. These

qualities cannot, of course, be given or taken away by the Church's treatment, but they can be quickened or dulled. The best and most gifted members of a congregation should feel honoured to be chosen as teachers, and they should feel by the interest taken in their work that the eyes of the Church are on them.

We have not yet given the Sunday school its place of importance. That place is first. We cannot overestimate the importance of that time of life when hearts are pure and minds are plastic, when spiritual impressions make an indelible mark. To influence youth is to move the world. The children are susceptible to the highest, and are open to all generous impulses ; but for the very same reason they can get a twist in their moral growth which will outlive life itself.

The inventiveness of love is always needed here. The mere existence of a Sunday school is nothing in itself. It

may even conceivably be an evil thing, prejudicing young hearts against the truth. This is not the place to criticise old methods or to suggest new ones.

I content myself with emphasising the duty of the Church to make its Sunday school as efficient as possible, and this it can only do by unfailing care and constant sympathy. Every facility should be given, and everything be done, to enlist in the work the best possible assistants. After all, it is not the mere teaching in itself which tells. A teacher's influence is a matter of personality. A manly fellow who will make the little men admire and love him as only boys can, a true-hearted woman who takes her girls into her heart, make the sort of teachers whose work tells to the end of time. Perhaps if our Sunday schools were surrounded by the prayerful love of the whole Church, there would be more of these.

This being so, our Sunday-school work is something different in kind

from day-school work, and the relation of teachers to scholars should be different. Many of the day-school ideals may with advantage be introduced into many Sunday schools, such as the inevitable blackboard and chalk, but it must never be forgotten that we have a higher purpose than mere instruction. The dull, listless repetition of catechism and verses is a very pathetic thing, and is often found where the discipline is best. The little ones sometimes ask for bread and get a stone—pleading to be loved, and looked on as receptacles to shovel in scraps of informative knowledge. It would be foolish to underestimate memory work, and the accurate instruction in the facts of revelation ; but there is a better part which can include all methods and take the most out of them. If the little ones are impressed by their teacher's loving earnestness, and influenced by his sincere testimony, all the rest will be added.

To bring the children to Jesus, you must bring Jesus to the children. This atmosphere of love will only be where the work among the children lies upon the heart of the Church. The Church must never belittle what is done in the Sunday school. We must honour it more, and make it honourable.

II. THE GAIN OF THE CHURCH FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Anything done in this line by a congregation comes back with tenfold reward. The blessing is received in many ways. Not only that the children in time become members of the Church, and not only that the great advantage is derived of having a constituency educated in the verities and mysteries of the faith; but long before these effects are felt, the reflex action on the Church is immense.

The Sunday school, for one thing, affords room for service to many who must have scope for their zeal if they

are to keep their faith. The teachers are sometimes benefited more than their scholars. Indeed, it ought always to be so. The Church generally can always learn from the Sunday school. Again and again Christ taught the need for the child-heart, even to see the kingdom of heaven.

In self-sufficiency we sometimes go to the children to *teach*—Christ sent His disciples to the children to *learn*. We need never want for an object-lesson in the essentials of the faith. When ambition broke out among the disciples, bringing discord and strife, Christ called a little child and set him in their midst. We have all to be brought back to this. We can all still learn of the little ones in our Christian life.

The Sunday school, if we only saw its possibilities, has the closest possible relation to the Church. It should feed the Church spiritually, as well as feed it bodily in days to come, when the present scholars step into the ranks

strong for the heat and burden of the day.

We need to become more convinced of the large importance of this work, and give it a first place in our prayers and thought. The inventiveness of love, which is seen in the origin of the movement, will always be seen where any change is needed for its fruitful working. It is for the Church to be so intensely interested that, if need be, we shall give up even our prejudices. We must never be a stumbling-block to any of Christ's little ones.

HUGH BLACK.

TO AMUSEMENTS

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.”—ECCLES. xi. 9.

[“Into judgment,” not necessarily into condemnation ; God will pass in review the use to which we put these things.]

THE question of amusements is one of our ever-recurring problems. Like the poor, it is always with us. In our Young Men’s Guilds and Christian Associations, in our Church Assemblies and in the Press, the subject is continually to the front ; at times it becomes the question of the hour. Nor need this surprise us, for this is a question which every generation must

settle for itself, and in which the decision of one generation can be but a very imperfect guide for the next. Finality is not possible here. The social environment is continually changing, so that, even though general principles remain fixed, our application of them is in need of constant revision. Hence the discussion is bound to go on.

Will the Bible help us? Yes, if we know how to use it; and I have quoted at the head of this paper one passage which will show to us the kind of help we may look for in the Word of God. "Take what God has provided,"—such seems to be the meaning of the words,—“use it to make life bright and glad; youth was meant to live in the sunshine, but remember well, for this, as for every other gift of life, thy account is with Him.” But, someone will reply, this is too vague and indefinite; it leaves us just where we were: what we

want is practical advice, advice about card-playing, theatre-going, dancing, and the like ; but all this does no more than place the matter in our own hands, leaving each to do what seems right in his own eyes. And, undoubtedly, the Bible does leave the matter in our own hands. That is its way, not to draft little rules, but to state great principles, which light up all our life. If what you want is a code of regulations, you must go elsewhere. The Bible is not a book of religious etiquette, to tell us exactly what we ought to do under all conceivable circumstances ; nor is it a kind of ready-reckoner to save us the trouble of using our own brains. It does, as I say, leave the matter in our own hands, and I am not going to take it out. I have no rules to give to anyone, not even the rules which guide my own practice. My aim is simply to indicate some of those facts and principles which, whatever our final judgment may be, ought

to be present when that judgment is formed.

I assume without discussing—for that surely at this hour of the day would be wasting words—the necessity of recreation. But it may be as well to point out in passing, that we should often be rid of the problem in its acutest forms if the average young man and woman could be taught to enlarge their ideas of recreation. The ordinary Briton hardly knows what to do with a holiday when he gets one. To multitudes “amusement” suggests only “an hour of glorious life” upon the football field, or a dancing ballet-girl behind the footlights. What is needed is the creation of as many healthy interests as possible (and this surely is a task to which the Sunday school should lend its aid), so that a mere change of occupation will sometimes supply all the recreation that is needed. “Whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honourable; whatso-

ever things are just ; whatsoever things are pure ; whatsoever things are lovely ; whatsoever things are of good report ” —let us fix our minds on these things, and we shall kill off most surely the desire for low or questionable forms of amusement.

As for the rest, let me sum up what I have to say in two general statements :—

1st, The *accent* of life must not lie on any form of amusement. We are not here to amuse ourselves. Life is not meant to be a playground, but rather a workshop, a battlefield. “Spill not the morning in recreation,” says an old writer. “And on the seventh day God rested from all His work which He had made.” Six days for creation, the seventh for recreation, such is the Divine order ; but some will have recreation the seven days through. Such folly defeats its own end : amusement ceases to amuse, the cloyed appetite turns

with loathing from the richest fare, and the sated pleasure-seeker begins to feel "how tolerable life would be were it not for its pleasures!" The conclusion is obvious, at whatever cost amusement must be made to keep its subordinate place. If desire for it becomes like another Aaron's rod, swallowing up all the other interests of our life, we must put our heel upon it. To suffer it to become the ruling passion is to take the straight path to moral anarchy. However harmless a pleasure may be in itself, if it can only be kept off the throne of life by banishing it from our life, so be it, it must go. If, therefore, our love of sport is fast developing into a mania; if novel-reading or card-playing is filling us with hot, feverish unrest, so that the performance of the ordinary duties of life becomes irksome, if not impossible, then there is only one thing for it, "cut it off, and cast it from thee."

2nd, But there is a further question.

I must ask, not only what is good for me, but also, how what I do may affect others. That this question ought to be asked, none will deny. The life of every one of us is hedged about by consideration of others, and no man may say, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Let me illustrate by a reference to the vexed question of theatre-going. I do not want to indulge in indiscriminate condemnation. I am not a theatre-goer myself, not even an occasional one; some of you who read these words perhaps are; but I assume no airs of superiority on that account. Of course, if our minds are quite made up, nothing I can say will make any difference. But some there are who are not wholly comfortable in the practice, and are sometimes troubled by secret misgivings. To such let me put a few simple questions:—

(a) Is your influence leading others to follow your example? Is anyone screening himself behind you? You

“never countenance bad plays, or visit low theatres.” Quite so; but we have to deal with facts as we find them, and there are bad plays, and there are low theatres. Will those whom your example first leads to the theatre be as careful in their choice as you? You resent, perhaps, this method of argument. Why, you ask, must you give up an innocent amusement because some abuse it? Well, I do not enter further into the matter now, I only remind you that your example *may* lead others astray, and I ask you, are you willing to face that risk?

(b) You tell me the amusement of the theatre does you no harm. Granted; but what of the harm it involves to those who provide it for you? Any opinion of mine as to the morality of the stage would be worthless; but I wish I had space to quote some testimonies which lie before me as I write—testimonies, mark you, not of ignor-

ant and prejudiced "outsiders," but of men who have spent their lives behind the curtain. That there are pure men and women on the stage against whom slander can breathe no lightest word, goes without saying ; but does not the very fact that these are so held up seem to show with what difficulty men keep their feet in this slipperiest of slippery places? Before you spend another evening in the theatre, take heed that your pleasure is not bought at the price of degraded men, corrupt women, and ruined children.

Unrest on this particular subject shows perhaps nothing so clearly as the number of lives that drift aimless and purposeless, mere flotsam and jetsam on the stream of time. Live for Christ, make Him your Master. All these questions are best answered at His side. When we are living for Him many of our questions answer themselves, or drop out of sight altogether ; we see things in their true

proportion, they “sort” themselves—they fall into their right place, and all life gets an ordered simplicity it could never have before. “Learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

GEORGE JACKSON.

TO ATHLETICS

“ Friends have I found here too . . .
Comradely, frank, athletic.”

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

“ It is enough that through Thy grace
I saw naught common on Thy earth.”

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE day for supposing that recreations lie wholly outside the serious concerns of the Christian minister is gone by. Multiplied duties make all the day for him ; but if the simplest forms of exercise and the companionship of his books supply every change he seeks, his people cannot subsist on equally simple fare. Time for recreation most of them will have ; the steady advance of social reform already provides it for

nearly all in such measure as our grandparents never dreamed of hoping for. That leisure has to be used, and it is of the utmost concern to the Christian minister whether it be used well or ill. Some men's characters are chiefly formed by their serious occupation; others are more largely influenced by what should be the side interests of their lives. The recreations of the people must, therefore, stand with the homes of the people, their hours of labour, their wages, and their education, as a subject of very serious concern to the Christian minister amongst them.

But not to him alone. Everyseasoned Sunday school teacher knows how his power for good is cramped and weakened by the short time in which he is in contact with his class. However carefully he may supplement Sunday's intercourse by occasional visitation of his boys in their homes, he knows that the larger part of their

lives is not within his reach. They may mark him off from those who teach and command him during the week, by displaying towards him that pleasant mixture of affection and good-fellowship which witnesses to the happiest relations between teacher and class ; but he is peculiarly a Sunday possession. If he could see more of his class in the week, his influence should be enlarged, and the awkward gap between Sunday and Sunday bridged. How far, then, is the teacher justified in using recreations as an adjunct to the ordinary work of the Sunday school ? Shall we, or shall we not, have the “—— Sunday School Cricket Club,” the “—— Sunday School Football Club,” or the “—— Sunday School Gymnasium ” ?

It must be obvious that there are schools so circumstanced as to make any discussion of the subject superfluous. Where the Sunday school is more or less a reproduction of a day

school, the organisation might exist, naturally enough, under the wing of the day school. At all events, the day school should be its origin. Where the Sunday school is but a part of some philanthropic institution or Christian mission, there, also, no special organisation may be called for. But where a Sunday school is the peculiar training-ground of a congregation, and where no organisation already exists which helps the Sunday school in uniting boys only brought together on Sundays, what then? Here, it seems to me, the Sunday school may well take under its benevolent eye certain forms of honest, healthy recreation.

Many may at the outset raise a serious objection. Our object, they might urge, is peculiarly and exclusively religious ; we shall imperil our influence if we enter on affairs which are sometimes tainted with brutality, or with betting, or with that absorption in sport which turns the thing

innocent into a very snare of the devil. These objections, and some others, ought in every case to be well weighed before any decision is arrived at ; but in the main I do not think they ought to prevail. It is absolutely certain that boys and young men will have some recreation. What is it to be, and in what spirit is it to be followed? If ardent Christian people elect to stand aloof from all such things, they must not complain if the character impressed upon recreations is a bad one. On the other hand, we can see that athletics, and even successful competition in public, do not of necessity undermine the Christian character. But perhaps this argument needs little enforcing just now. People may be tired of hearing the late Ion Keith-Falconer, Mr. C. T. Studd, and Mr. Stanley Smith quoted as proof that godliness may go with a very marked development of skill in athletics. But, to cite a modern example, here is Mr. F. S. Horan, the

Cambridge three-miler, and one of the finest runners we have seen in this generation. He is a leader in evangelistic effort amongst the younger men at Cambridge, and works hard at seaside services in the Long Vacation. As for athletic curates in the Church of England, I need only bring up two recent examples familiar to all who watch athletics—Mr. Pollock Hill, the miler and three-miler, and Mr. Ramsbotham, the sprinter.

But it may be urged that these examples do not altogether apply, and that they do not dispel some doubt as to whether the athletics might not tend to dwarf the more serious work of the Sunday school. The danger, I think, is imaginary. No doubt some boys would take more eagerly to play than to work, but after all it is just possible that without some such aid you would fail to keep these boys at all. As to the alliance deteriorating better material, my own experience is against

it. Some years ago I formed a cricket club chiefly amongst the members of a Bible class. These members had, for the most part, extremely primitive notions about the game. It was my privilege to bowl, keep wicket to the other man, and do much of the fielding as well. We played at Victoria Park, London, where, in those days (it may be even so now), your long-stop was in awkward proximity to the bowler in another game, and your cover-point could, in moments of repose, chat with the square-leg of another team. We developed a good deal of interest in cricket, and the best spirits on the field were some of the most regular and worthy members of the class. We met there other clubs formed upon very similar lines, and I never heard that the devotion to athletics had harmed the higher work.

But, of course, much must depend upon those who organise and watch over such clubs. I say, "watch over,"

of set purpose ; for, while there are many who, in moments of zeal, will help to start such organisations, it is not so easy to find the men to cherish their growth, and preside benignly over their maturity. It means the sacrifice of Saturday afternoon, the one half-holiday of the week. It means the testing of patience, forbearance, tact, and temper under new and often very trying conditions. But the sacrifice so made—if made by one who puts athletics in their right place, and regards them as a means to his end—is, in its way, just as real a piece of work for God as the hours of preparation for Sunday's lessons, or those lessons themselves.

To be of value, such clubs must be managed with care ; not taken up fitfully and anon neglected, nor yet so harassed by grandmotherly supervision that the members learn no self-reliance, and feel no personal responsibility for their welfare. If done at all, the thing

should be well done ; if well done, it should be of distinct service to the school.

The hardest boys to deal with and to retain as elder scholars are often the bolder spirits, abounding in vitality, and capable of mischief to a quite distressing degree. Let us assist them to find a legitimate vent for their vitality. They will not love us the less for recognising the existence of their bodies as well as their souls. As boys grow, some of them are very certain to be tempted with the suggestion that Sunday school going is a poor business, more worthy of girls and weaklings than of boys making haste to call themselves men. They may be the less disposed to accept this fallacy if the school connects itself in their minds with healthy exercise for the body as well as with the training of the heart for God.

No doubt there are dangers ; few honest enterprises can make way with-

out them. But I believe that the balance of experience will be found on the side of associating athletics with Sunday schools and similar organisations. As a parting shot, it may be well to suggest that no attempt should be made to organise such clubs unless there are the right men to work them.

A. R. BUCKLAND.

TO TEMPERANCE

“ Clearly his own fault. Yet I think
My fault in part, who did not pray,
But lagged, and would not lead the way.
I haply proved his *missing* link.
God help us both to mend and pray.”

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

FEW things are more worthy of observation than the way in which words grow and decay.

The word “temperance” has grown larger or less, according to the men who employed it. I need scarcely say that it is a New Testament word—a good one, too. One of the most striking connections in which it occurs is Gal. v. 22, 23, where Paul sets before us a beautiful array of virtues which are the fruit of the Spirit.

What does he mean by "temperance"? Well, the Greek word is very significant. Originally, at all events, and at its best, it referred to being *strong in oneself*, and accordingly signified *self-possession, self-control*. A man who was, as it were, master in his own house, *i.e.* the house of his body and soul, with all their needs, inclinations, desires, powers, he was ἐγκρατής, or "temperate"; to him ἐγκράτεια, or "temperance," belonged.

The word "temperance," too, which comes to us from the Latin, has a beautiful meaning, namely, "symmetry, proportion." A "temperate" man, therefore, may be described as a man who so rules and controls himself that he is all proportion, symmetry, harmony.

What a glorious thing, then, to be "temperate"! What efforts can be more appropriate to a Sunday school than efforts to enforce and spread "temperance"!

But it is too obvious to need remark that "temperance," in the sense in which it is now most frequently used—to which the title of this paper refers—is a much narrower thing than "temperance" as I have depicted it. The good old-fashioned term is in danger of being so clipped and shrunk that it will soon be no longer recognisable. This, I think, would be a pity. It is not, after all, so light a matter as we are apt to think, to narrow a larger, richer word down to just one of its applications, however important that particular application may be. This is the reason why I have called attention to the thoughts just presented.

There is no inconsistency, however, between laying stress at one time on the general virtue of "temperance," and at another on the particular form of it known as *abstinence from intoxicants*, or *teetotalism*. On the contrary, the latter may be a necessary stepping-

stone to the former. Let me in a word or two explain how this is.

In the earlier years of life the general idea of duty can only be brought home to us in connection with some particular definite act or bit of conduct. Indeed, this is far more frequently the case with grown-up people than teachers of all kinds are in the habit of recognising. Only through particular commands and prohibitions do we *learn* what duty is; only by doing certain definite things and giving up others do we get into the way of *doing* our duty.

Accordingly, if children and young people are to be trained up to *self-control in general*, and to develop symmetry of character, we must do our best to induce them to control especially *particular* appetites, and to give up particular gratifications — chiefly, of course, such as are likely in themselves to weaken self-control.

But then people say, "What can

young people be asked to give up? or to control themselves in? Let them enjoy themselves. Leave them free. They will soon enough have to practise self-denial."

There are probably very few in our Sunday schools who are in danger of becoming drunkards because they have already actually begun to drink—at all events, among those who supply most of their recruits to the Bands of Hope. But we are mistaken if we suppose that there is nothing whatever as to which self-control can be, and ought to be, exercised. Nor do I refer now to such matters as words and thoughts. No, I mean bodily appetites. What is more common, for example, than for girls to become almost slaves to sucking and eating sweets? And how lamentably common is smoking among young boys! These are two things which need to be looked to by true temperance workers. A great step would, in hundreds of cases, be taken

even towards "teetotalism" if these habits could be brought under control ; for they are already existing, *actual* habits ; they are, moreover, mischievous both in their bodily and moral results. People cannot, at this point, accuse us of anticipating, as they do in connection with the drink question.

But the reproach of prematurely anticipating evil, even with regard to drink, is groundless. The young people who frequent our Sunday schools, even though they do not drink themselves, are in the vast majority of cases only too familiar already with drunkenness. They see it often in their own relatives ; they see it in their acquaintances ; they see it in their friends. The temptation to make the first experiment as to how it feels to have taken rather too much—a very real, a sadly common temptation, too—may overthrow them any day. Shall we wait, then, till that step has been taken ? And can it be called premature

if we enlist them on the other side? If that be premature, then all education, all training, all warning may be dubbed premature. One of the best means of counteracting the fatal influence of familiarity with this awful curse, and the jocular, nay, the frivolity, not to say sympathy, with which, in some of its forms, it is constantly being treated, is to get young people committed, not only to abstinence, but to positive antagonism.

Nothing better can happen to a boy or girl than to get committed to a good thing at the earliest possible stage in their life. Whether it be to abstinence from needless sweets, or from tobacco, or from drink, an important step has been taken in the direction of that general self-control which is one of the prime conditions of an honourable and prosperous life.

Teachers and friends ought, of course, to exercise wisdom in this matter. For one thing, I would per-

sonally never ask a boy or girl to take a *pledge for life*. A promise for a year, or for five years, or ten, or till a particular age is reached, would often be made, when to propose one for life would deter. Still another thing, which it is of the utmost consequence never to forget, especially in dealing with young people—they would *realise what a promise for a limited period means*, whereas they *cannot realise what is involved in a pledge for life*. It is, perhaps, this consideration that gives rise to some of the doubts and difficulties that are raised. Neglect of it is probably one of the chief reasons of a good deal of the leakage which temperance societies have to lament.

Another thing to be earnestly avoided is very strong, passionate language regarding “the drink.” Our language, as a rule, should *not outrun the meaning men can put into it, or have a right to put into it*. If it do, harm, rather than good, will result. In itself it may

deserve the strongest denunciations of which we are capable ; and people of riper years will, or ought to, be able to enter into them, but the young cannot. A teacher with tact and gentleness ought not, however, to find difficulty in so presenting the case that they shall recognise it as a sensible, good thing to pledge themselves for a *certain period*. Efforts to promote temperance, both in the larger and in the narrower sense, prosecuted in this spirit and on these lines, will seldom be criticised, and will assuredly be attended with success.

One word more. If it is good to get the young committed to steps which lead them away from harm, and develop self-control, how much more to induce them to decide to be on the side of Him who will not only show them the right way, and inspire them with higher aspirations to walk in it, but also *strengthen* them to war a holy warfare with every form of sin, and to

foster every Christian virtue alike in themselves and others. Nay, indeed, I would add, in conclusion, to be linked on to Christ is the only safeguard against every form of "intemperance"; and temperance itself may become a root of that spiritual pride which is, in God's sight, one of the most hateful of sins, unless it is associated with faith and loyalty towards our great Saviour and Lord, and is one of the fruits of His indwelling Spirit.

D. W. SIMON.

TO MODERN BIBLICAL CRITICISM

“There is nothing so dangerous, because nothing so revolutionary and convulsive, as the strain to keep things fixed, when all the world is, by the very law of its creation, in eternal progress.”

AMONG the many gains of this now closing century must be reckoned the great advance in the knowledge of the Bible which modern research has enabled us to make. “Criticism” is but the convenient designation of the most approved methods of ascertaining historical truth. It is a process of which every inquirer, more or less consciously, avails himself. Everyone has his own tests, which he applies to what he hears or reads; and by these tests he determines whether or

not belief is warranted. If a sailor tells us he found oranges growing among the icebergs of the Arctic regions, we refuse to believe him, because his statement will not harmonise with the knowledge we already possess. If a document professing to belong to the eighteenth century, speaks freely of railways, telegraphs, and electric light, we at once condemn it as spurious. Every man is more or less a critic, and criticism as a science collects and applies all the criterions which experience has approved for the determination of the dates of documents, of their character and credibility, and for discriminating between what is to be accepted as historical and what must be regarded as embellished or fabricated.

Necessarily criticism has been applied to the Bible, because we are bound to inquire into the nature of the books which compose it, and ascertain, as precisely as possible, what was their

origin, what their character and purpose, and what their authority. It matters little to us if the stories of early Rome are proved to be mythical, or if the text of the Koran has been subjected to various recensions. The determination of the authorship of *Titus Andronicus* is of merely literary interest; and the anachronisms of the *Epistles of Phalaris* serve only as a whet to the taste of the classical scholar. But no Christian can be altogether unconcerned about the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, or feel that his faith stands just as securely if it is found that the early records of the life of Christ are largely adulterated with mythical narrative.

We are bound to learn the truth regarding the books of Scripture, for thus only can we perfectly meet the mind of God in them. Every step we take towards the full truth is a step nearer to the full understanding of God's revelation of Himself. We do

not wish to live under false impressions regarding the antiquity and origin of man, or regarding the history and method of God's revelation of Himself to man, or regarding what our Lord actually said and did. It is the truth we desire, the actual fact. And criticism is simply the application of the best-known methods for ascertaining the truth regarding ancient documents and the history they record.

And so far as criticism has as yet gone, and accepting the results in which all critics are fairly well agreed, it is evident that the Bible greatly gains in intelligibility, in interest, and in security as a basis of faith. Accept the account which criticism gives of the gradual growth of revelation, and at once all the persistent objections to the morality of the Old Testament fall away. If we adopt the attitude towards the early chapters of Genesis which criticism recommends as ap-

appropriate, we find ourselves thereby relieved from the impossible task of reconciling them with science. If we lose some part of what we have been accustomed to cherish, when it is demonstrated that the Book of Daniel was written centuries after the Exile, we gain significant insight into the meaning of the Messianic expectation. If we see the books of the New Testament emerging from the fires of criticism in much the same shape as they were before, our faith in them receives strong confirmation.

Are Sunday school teachers, then, to be expected to indoctrinate their pupils in the results of modern criticism? It has recently been said, "It is not fair to your children that you should, for the sake of their faith, keep them in the dark about truths which in after years they are bound to hear, perhaps from men who have no care for their faith." Substantially this is true, but some prudence is demanded in its

actual application. In the first place, can we expect that all Sunday school teachers should themselves be sufficiently acquainted with the results of criticism to make them safe guides? I think not. Perhaps, considering present needs, they ought to be; and anyone who would undertake judiciously, conservatively, and simply to explain to them the findings of criticism would do a good work. These findings are, no doubt, easily accessible; and few of the six hundred thousand Sunday school teachers of England and Wales can be necessarily ignorant of the results of criticism. And even so much familiarity with critical methods and results as would expel distrust and suspicion, and inspire confidence, would be a very important step in advance.

But even supposing Canon Driver or Professor Sanday took a class in a Sunday school, what use would they make of their critical knowledge?

The difference between the teaching of an expert in criticism and that of an uneducated Christian would appear rather in the reserve of the former on some points—rather in what he would *not* say than in any positive statements. This reserve would appear both in regard to the Bible as a whole, and in connection with details in the various books. He would, I think, introduce the Bible to the child on its own merits, without adding any precise statements regarding its inspiration. He would not say, “Every word of this Book was written by God ;” but by using it as the one source of his teaching, and by treating it with reverence, and by opening the heart of the child to its truth, and to God’s grace in it, he would bring the child into the proper attitude of spirit towards it, and yet leave him unfettered by any theory of its origin which might afterwards stumble him. Reverence does not rest on definitions ; and the

child who sees the Bible treated with reverence and trust will himself assume the right attitude towards it.

In matters of detail every teacher is almost sure to be asked by some inquisitive child, Is this true? And, of course, when this question is put, a straightforward answer, according to the information which the teacher himself has, must be given. I have never known harm to result from admitting to an inquiring child that a date, or a number, or a name was wrong. Having no theory of the literal accuracy of the Bible in its every statement, children are neither disconcerted nor surprised to be told that here or there is a slight inaccuracy. It does not alter one whit their regard for the Bible. That I am sure of. With the early chapters of Genesis, the description of Creation, the story of the Fall, the longevity of the Antediluvians, and such matters, there is greater difficulty. Inevitably children will ask, Was the

world really made in six days? Was the woman made out of a rib of the man? Did the serpent really speak? Where was, and is, the Garden of Eden? And it requires care and sincerity to give the child such answers as will neither lessen his faith in the Bible nor fill his mind with beliefs which must afterwards be given up. When such beliefs have been planted in association with, and even identified with, belief in the Bible, then, necessarily, when they are uprooted, the root of faith in Scripture is torn up along with them, and the heart left void and devastated.

In answering these questions, the teacher must, of course, answer according to his own belief. If he believes that the serpent spoke, and that men lived many hundreds of years, there is no more to be said. The child will not be astonished by such statements. Only he runs a risk of losing faith afterwards. If, however, the

teacher does not himself accept those things in their literal meaning, he need not scruple to tell the child that they are stories with a meaning. And if he can explain the meaning so much the better. The child's mind is at once and for ever put on the right lines, and will never be stumbled by these narratives.

The teacher should remember that the child has no preconceived ideas about what he will find in the Bible, and is not staggered when told that instead of prosaic narrative the first part is imaginative poetry. Gratuitous information of a critical kind is more likely to do harm than good, but information demanded by the child should be given honestly and fearlessly. Truth will find in the child's mind a clean soil in which it will congenially root itself and produce appropriate fruit.

MARCUS DODS.

TO THE BUSINESS OF LIFE

“Those who in home or school or college train a young life know not for what momentous responsibilities they are fashioning it. . . . Should the life break or fail in the testings of future years . . . it will be mainly the fault, not of the person who fails, but of those who were unfaithful as parents or teachers.”

J. R. MILLER, D.D.

To help a child to choose his vocation in life is one of the most serious and difficult tasks to which a parent is called. A mistake in the choice is in nine cases out of ten irretrievable. When disposition and talent do not harmonise with the work to be done, life becomes drudgery. The fact that so many find themselves harnessed to the wrong task accounts not only for

poor workmanship but also for the absence of real joy in the discharge of daily duty. By the blunder of parent and child a skilful engineer may be turned into an inefficient doctor, to the impoverishment of his own nature and the danger of society. The most valuable work is done for love.

While the Sunday school teacher may not be able to guide his scholars in the choice of a calling, he can do his part to fit them for whatever calling they may choose. His work is to send out his scholars as fully furnished as possible for the business of life. The teacher who is bent on showing children how to get to heaven must not ignore the strenuous years of toil, temptation, and sorrow through which they must pass, nor forget that lessons on how to live render the lesson on how to die almost unnecessary. And just as the teacher will be sure to cultivate such virtues as truthfulness, purity, charity, and unselfishness, so he must not omit

to give definite instruction on the ordinary work of life.

The qualities which make a good man of business ought to be formed in childhood. A boy is really learning his trade before he handles a tool. For in the world of business men are differentiated on the one hand by God's gift of faculty, and on the other hand by their own characters. The former is beyond our power; the latter is largely shaped by the teacher before the business of life begins. Every teacher ought therefore to remember that he is not only guiding immortal souls, but training boys who will show the quality of their souls as merchants, mechanics, doctors, lawyers, and labourers.

Two things will greatly help the teacher in his task. In the first place, the Bible is marvellously adapted for conveying instruction in the principles which regulate all kinds of work. In the second place, the children are always ready to listen to one who

speaks to them about their future employment.

Starting with this conception, the teacher can help to lay the foundation of an honourable career in those who come under his influence. And to impart the principles and ideals which hold in all the relationships of life, is a greater service than to give instruction in the technicalities of a trade or profession. A good man will be an honest tradesman ; a clever tradesman may not be a good man. Goodness ensures the right use of all the faculties ; mental ability divorced from goodness only increases the power of wrong-doing.

While the temptations of business life may not be known or felt by the boys in our Sunday schools, they are best prepared to meet temptation who are armed beforehand with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith. The soldier does not know what fighting means until he is in the actual

shock of battle, but if he has neglected his preliminary drill he will be all the more ready to turn his back to the foe.

One of the first lessons to be taught in view of the business of life is the dignity of work. Before the child has lost the simplicity of his nature, or fallen a prey to the silly notions of society, he should be taught that all work, whether of hand or head, which helps the varied life of the world, is a carrying out of the Divine purpose, and is therefore sacred. The Bible never fails to enforce this lesson. It glorifies the labour of farmer and fisherman, mason and carpenter, shepherd and vine-dresser, lawgiver and judge, prophet and king. The Divine Son who wrought with human hands at the carpenter's bench threw around the humblest tasks a glory and a dignity which ought for ever to ennoble the life of the lowliest worker. The vulgar disdain of commerce and manual

labour must not be allowed to root itself in the healthy mind of childhood.

Along with the feeling of reverence for honest toil, the teacher should encourage the temper which sees the ideal in all the work of life. Amid the sordidness and meanness of the world the spirit of ideality often perishes, but it may be fairly well developed before the pressure of worldliness is keenly felt.

In the Bible this spirit is revealed in a rare degree. According to psalmist and prophet, sun and moon and stars, mountains and hills and trees, praise the Lord whose name alone is excellent and whose glory is above the earth and the heaven. And all the works of man were done by the power and for the glory of God. Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God, and enabled to work in gold and in silver and in brass and in all manner of workmanship. David smote Goliath in the name and by the help of the God of the

armies of Israel. Lawgivers received wisdom and prophets inspiration from on high. In the New Testament we are enjoined to do all our work as unto the Lord and not to men. It is only by thus looking at the ideal side of life that we can see beyond its petty cares and above its worldly gains. All work is done for God. We are His servants, His ambassadors, His co-workers. Those who so regard themselves make "drudgery divine."

The teacher who thus places work on the highest level will seize every opportunity of preparing the child to form a just estimate of the *results* of human effort. Especially must he strive to show the difference between true and apparent success. There is a wonderful charm in the phrase a "successful man." The successful man is petted, admired, honoured. Riches are often regarded as the chief end of life. And so consuming is the desire to reach the end, that gambling and

lying and cheating are resorted to as the means. Business morality is laughed at. Right and wrong are ruled out of account. Character and conscience are sold for money.

In face of these things, the wise teacher will seek to influence the generous mind of youth before the rage for gain has been developed. With the Bible for his text-book, he will find abundance of material with which to enforce the lesson that goodness is true greatness, and that a pure conscience is of more value than uncounted wealth. No place ought to be allowed in a boy's mind for the feeling that a good coat and a well-filled purse make a gentleman. Character is what the children must be taught to respect.

As money is not the chief end of business, so business is not the sole interest of life. Instead of ruling it, men often allow business to be master. Life becomes cramped and narrow,

Time is completely monopolised and strength entirely spent in the making of daily bread. Many men bury themselves in business, and become dead to all the higher claims of friendship, of society, and of the kingdom of God. And as the Sunday school is the first link that binds a child to the Church of Christ, the teacher will strive to make it a golden link. If the children are early taught to take an interest in the Church and its work, they will be saved from many a temptation in after days. The habit of taking a share in Church work will prevent them from being tyrannised over by business. Love of Church ought to be encouraged and cultivated as earnestly as love of home.

The Sunday school teacher can not only fortify the scholar against many of the temptations of business, but cultivate that just and generous regard for others, which, according to our Lord Himself, is the fulfilling of the second

great commandment. A child should receive in the nursery his first lesson on loving his neighbour, and be taught, as soon as he knows the meaning of "my" and "mine," to do to others as he would that they should do to him.

This principle, constantly and truly carried out, would bring about an entire transformation in the world of business. Self-assertion, disregard for the rights and wishes of others, and the want of love, are the causes of nearly all the friction, strife, and unscrupulous competitions of our business life. That each one is his brother's keeper, that success achieved by wronging a neighbour has the curse of God upon it, that the noblest use of strength is to spend it on behalf of the weak, that the Christian law of love is supreme in all the relationships of life, are the lessons whose enforcement the Sunday school must share with the home.

This kind of work requires a strong

teacher. He must be possessed of moral enthusiasm which will communicate itself to the children. He must be a true man. He must know life, and be able to separate shadow from substance, appearance from reality. He must hate all shams, insincerities, meannesses. He must be quick to reveal the deep moral interest which lies in the histories, incidents, parables of the Bible. He must watch and pray for the development of moral character in the children. And above all, he must know and be able to tell whence comes the power to do the will of God.

A. R. HENDERSON.



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